Numb. 58

The TATLER.

By *Isaac Bickerstaff* Esq;

Quicquid agunt Homines nostri Farrago Libelli.

From *Saturday August* 20. to *Tuesday August* 23. 1709.

White's Chocolate-house, August 22.

POOR *Cynthio* (who does me the Honour to talk to me now and then very freely of his most secret Thoughts, and tells me his most private Frailties) own'd to me, that tho' he is now in his Prime of Life, Love had kill'd all his Desires, and he was now as much to be trusted with a Fine Lady, as if he were Eighty. That one Passion for *Clarissa* has taken up (said he) my whole Soul, and all my idle Flames are extinguish'd, as you may observe, ordinary Fires are often put out by the Sunshine. This was a Declaration that was not to be made, but upon the highest Opinion of a Man's Sincerity; yet as much a Subject to Raillery as such a Speech would be, it is certain, that Chastity is a nobler Quality, and as much to be valued in Men as in Women. The mighty *Scipio*, who (as *Bluffe* says in the Comedy) was a Pretty Fellow in his Time, was of this Mind, and is celebrated for it by an Author of good Sense. When he liv'd, Wit, and Humour, and Raillery, and Publick Success, were at as high a Pitch in *Rome*, as at present in *England*; yet I believe, there was no Man in those Days thought that General at all ridiculous in his Behaviour in the following Account of him: *Scipio*, at Four and Twenty Years of Age, had obtain'd a great Victory, and a Multitude of Prisoners of each Sex, and all Conditions, fell into his Possession: Among others, a beauteous Virgin in her early Bloom and Beauty. He had too sensible a Spirit to see the most lovely of all Objects without being mov'd with Passion: Besides which, there was no Obligation of Honour or Virtue to restrain his Desires towards one who was his by the Fortune of War. But a noble Indignation, and a sudden Sorrow, which appear'd in her Countenance, when a Conqueror cast his Eyes upon her, rais'd his Curiosity to know her Story. He was inform'd, That she was a Lady of the highest Condition in that Country, and contracted to *Indibilis*, a Man of Merit and Quality. The generous *Roman* soon plac'd himself in the Condition of that unhappy Man, who was to lose so charming a Bride; and tho' a Youth, a Batcheler, a Lover, and a Conqueror, immediately resolv'd to resign all the Invitations of his Passion, and the Rights of his Power, to restore her to her destin'd Husband. With this Purpose he commanded her Parents and Relations, as well as her Husband, to attend him at an appointed Time. When they met, and were waiting for the General, my Author frames to himself the different Concern of an unhappy Father, a despairing Lover, and a tender Mother, in the several Persons who were so related to the Captive. But for Fear of injuring the delicate Circumstances with an old Translation, I shall proceed to tell you, That *Scipio* appears to 'em, and leads in his Prisoner into their Presence. The *Romans* (as noble as they were) seem'd to allow themselves a little too much Triumph over the Conquer'd; therefore, as *Scipio* approach'd, they all threw themselves on their Knees, except the Lover of the Lady: But *Scipio* observing in him a manly Sullenness, was the more inclin'd to favour him, and spoke to him in these Words: *It is not the Manner of the* Romans *to use all the Power they justly may: We fight not to ravage Countries, or break through the Ties of Humanity; I am acquainted with your Worth, and your Interest in this Lady: Fortune has made me your Master; but I desire to be your Friend. This is your Wife; Take her, and may the Gods bless you with her. But far be it from* Scipio *to purchase a loose and momentary Pleasure at the Rate of making an honest Man unhappy.* *Indibilis*'s Heart was too full to make him any Answer, but threw himself at his Feet, and wept aloud. The Captive Lady fell into the same Posture, and they both remain'd so till the Father burst into the following Words: 'Oh Divine *Scipio*! The 'Gods have given you more than human Virtue. 'Oh Glorious Leader! Oh Wondrous Youth! Does 'not that oblig'd Virgin give you, while she prays to 'the Gods for your Prosperity, and thinks you sent 'down from them, Raptures above all the Transports 'which you could have reap'd from the Possession of 'her injur'd Person? The temperate *Scipio* answer'd him without much Emotion, and, saying, *Father, be a Friend to* Rome, retir'd. An immense Sum was offer'd as her Ransom; but he sent it to her Husband, and smiling, said, This is a Trifle after what I have given him already; but let *Indibilis* know, that Chastity at my Age is a much more difficult Virtue to practise, than Generosity. I observ'd, *Cynthio* was very much taken with my Narrative; but told me, this was a Virtue that would bear but a very inconsiderable Figure in our Days. However I took the Liberty to say, that we ought not to lose our Idea's of Things, tho' we had debauch'd our true Relish in our Practice. For after we have done laughing, solid Virtue will keep its Place in Men's Opinions: And tho' Custom made it not so scandalous as it ought to be, to ensnare innocent Women, and triumph in the Falshood; such Actions as we have here related, must be accounted true Gallantry, and but rise the higher in our Esteem, the farther they are remov'd from our Imitation.

Will's Coffee-house, August. 22.

A Man would be apt to think in this laughing Town, that it were impossible a Thing so exploded as speaking hard Words should be practis'd by any one that had ever seen good Company; but as if there were a Standard in our Minds as well as Bodies, you see very many just where they were Twenty Years ago, and more they cannot, will not arrive at. Were it not thus, the noble *Martius* would not be the only Man in *England* whom no Body can understand, tho' he talks more than any Man else. *Will. Dactyle* the Epigrammatist, *Jack Comma* the Grammarian, *Nick. Crosse-grain* who writes Anagrams,

Anagrams, and my ſelf, made a pretty Company at a Corner of this Room, and were very peaceably upon a Subject fit enough for us; which was, the Examination of the Force of the Particle *For*, when *Martius* join'd us; and being well known to us all, he ask'd, What we were upon? For he had a Mind to conſummate the Happineſs of the Day, which had been ſpent among the Stars of the firſt Magnitude, among the Men of Letters; and therefore, to put a Period to it, as he had commenc'd it, he ſhould be glad to be allow'd to participate of the Pleaſure of our Society. I told him the Subject. Faith, Gentlemen, ſaid *Martius*, your Subject is humble; and if you would give me leave to elevate the Converſation, I ſhould humbly offer, that you would enlarge your Enquiries to the Word *For-as-much*: For tho' I take it, ſaid he, to be but one Word; yet, the Particle *Much* implying Quantity, the Particle *As* Similitude, it will be greater, and more like our ſelves, to treat of *For-as-much*: *Jack Comma* is always ſerious, and anſwer'd *Martius*; I muſt take the Liberty to ſay, That you have fallen into all this Error and profuſe Manner of Speech by a certain Hurry in your Imagination, for Want of being more exact in the Knowledge of the Parts of Speech; and it is ſo with all Men who have not well ſtudied the Particle *For*. You have ſpoken *For* without making any Inference, which is the great Uſe of that Particle. There is no Manner of Force in your Obſervation of Quantity and Similitude in the Syllables *As* and *Much*. But it is ever the Fault of Men of great Wit to be incorrect; which Evil they run into by an indiſcreet Uſe of the Word *For*. Conſider all the Books of Controverſy which have been written, and I'll ingage you will obſerve, that all the Debate lies in this Point, Whether they brought in *For* in a juſt Manner, or forc'd it in for their own Uſe, rather than as underſtanding the Uſe of the Word it ſelf? There is nothing like familiar Inſtances: You have heard the Story of the *Iriſh-man*, who reading, *Money for Live Hair*, took a Lodging, and expected to be paid for living at that Houſe. If this Man had known *For* was in that Place, of a quite different Signification from the Particle *To*, he could not have fallen into the Miſtake of taking *Live* for what the *Latins* call *Vivere*, or rather, *Habitare*. *Martius* ſeem'd at a Loſs; and admiring his profound Learning, wiſh'd he had been bred a Scholar, for he did not take the Scope of his Diſcourſe. This wiſe Debate, of which we had very much more, made me reflect upon the Difference of their Capacities, and wonder that there could be as it were a Diverſity in Men's Genius for Nonſence; that one ſhould bluſter, while another crept in Abſurdities. *Martius* moves like a blind Man, lifting his Legs higher than the ordinary Way of Stepping; and *Comma*, like one who is only ſhort-ſighted, picking his Way when he ſhould be marching on. Want of Learning makes *Martius* a brisk entertaining Fool, and gives himſelf a full Scope; but that which *Comma* has, and calls Learning, makes him diffident, and curb his natural Miſunderſtanding, to the great Loſs of the Men of Raillery. This Converſation confirm'd me in the Opinion, that Learning uſually does but improve in us what Nature deſign'd us for. He that wants good Senſe, is unhappy in having it, for he has by it only more Ways of expoſing himſelf; and he that has Senſe knows, that Learning is not Knowledge, but rather the Art of uſing it.

St. *James's Coffee-houſe*, *Auguſt* 22.

Tho' we have Men of Intelligence that have ſpoken of the Propoſals of Peace and Conferences which have been held at *Tournay*, there are no certain Advices of any ſuch Treaty. We have undoubted Intelligence of the Defeat of the King of *Sweden*; and that Prince, (who for ſome Years had hover'd like an approaching Tempeſt, and was look'd up at by all the Nations of *Europe*, which ſeem'd to expect their Fate according to the Courſe he ſhould take), is now, in all Probability, an unhappy Exile, without the common Neceſſaries of Life. His Czariſh Majeſty treats his Priſoners with great Gallantry and Diſtinction. Count *Rhenſfeilds* has had particular Marks of his Majeſty's Eſteem, for his Merit and Services to his Maſter; but Count *Piper*, whom his Majeſty believes Author of the moſt violent Councils into which his Prince enter'd, is diſarm'd and entertain'd accordingly. That deciſive Battle was ended at Nine in the Morning, and all the *Swediſh* Generals dined with the Czar that very Day, and received Aſſurances, That they ſhould find *Muſcovy* was not unacquainted with the Laws of Honour and Humanity.

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